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MEAT EXTENSION REPORT FOR 1946 SPRING CONFERENCE

Some  $2\frac{1}{2}$  billion pounds of meat is dressed by farmers on the farm. This is about 1/10 of our total meat production. Two and one-half billion pounds is about the same quantity of meat that has been slaughtered annually by farmers for many years. It does not contain the suspected bulge in country slaughtering during the war years and must not be confused with black market operations.

Helping farm families get the most meals from their home dressed meat is the meat extension job. It is a part of the family's effort to protect its health and security. Meat extension work includes food budgets, producing essential animals, slaughtering, chilling, processing, curing, freezing, storing, and using meat. It crosses the fields of production, economics, engineering, marketing, nutrition, cooking, insect control, and community organization. This trespassing is premeditated and no apology is offered.

Farm people showed a renewed interest in home raised food during the depression when cash was short. This interest was maintained or increased during the war when food was short. The current effort to supply food to war torn countries emphasizes the continuing need to maintain that program and keep the home raised food ball rolling.

Freezing is a new and attractive tool that families are using to preserve home raised meat. Frozen food resembles fresh food in appearance, flavor, and food value and lends the necessary variety to the familiar diets of canned and salted foods. Freezing is being used successfully as a banner or a flag to attract the attention of farm families and stimulate further interest in growing their own.

On the debit side is the fact that few of Extension's county workers are familiar with freezing equipment or freezing methods. Freezing is almost spoil proof but it is not fool proof. Construction of locker plants, for example, may be inefficient or too costly and improper processing methods produce undesirable products.

This lack of experience with freezing methods is not confined to county workers either. Only a few of the State staffs have assigned that job to some specific person. The number of State specialists who are familiar with freezing methods or who are giving the freezing program special attention is limited.

Where State organizations are equipped to answer the increasing number of questions about construction, operation, and use of lockers and home freezers a most useful cooperation has been developed between them, the locker operators, the equipment salesmen, the State and National associations of locker operators and the trade press. The locker operators help materially in conducting meetings, demonstrations, and training schools. Conversely the locker plants become willing outlets for extension information on nutrition, food budgets, and production methods.

Training schools for county workers that equip them to hold similar meetings for their local people have proved a natural route for making the essential information available in the field. This work has been

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done largely by the State livestock specialists with frequent yeoman help from the food and engineering specialists. Good progress has been made but the program is often intermittent and casual.

These State meetings and training schools as well as the routine inquiries to the colleges and the Department have brought in an endless succession of questions about meat preservation that have no current answer: How can you cure meat safely at temperatures above 40°F.? How can you slow down mold growth on smoked hams? Which enzymes cause rancidity in frozen pork and how can they be controlled? How long should chilled beef and lamb be aged? Is the rapid freezing of meat really essential? Are blowers satisfactory for chilling locker rooms? Which home size freezer cabinet is best? What is the comparative food value of fresh frozen and smoked pork? Beginnings have been made by research workers along most of these lines but further and more definite information is needed.

The pressure of farm families for information on freezing equipment and methods suggests the need for a more unified handling of this portion of the food for health program. Freezing is only a portion of that program but because it is new, attractive, and practical it offers a means for adding appeal to our current effort to develop more stable, vigorous deep rooted rural communities.